

## Ep #7: The Emotional Armoire



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Ellie Frey Zagel**

[The Family Business Leader Podcast](#) with Ellie Frey Zagel

## Ep #7: The Emotional Armoire

You are listening to episode seven. Today we're going to talk about feeling better and getting unstuck while at work. Enjoy.

Welcome to *The Family Business Leader Podcast*. A podcast for multigenerational family business leaders who want to become the leader they were meant to be. If you're ready to learn how to develop your own authentic leadership style, successfully lead your family business and create your own lasting legacy while still honoring theirs this is the podcast for you. I'm your host, Ellie Frey Zagel, family business leadership coach and third-generation family business leader. Let's get to it.

Well, hello there, welcome back. Thank you so much for tuning in today. Today we're going to talk about, drum roll, one of my favorite topics which is emotions. We're going to talk about processing emotions while you're at work. This podcast will be perfect for you if you feel a sense of overwhelm and anxiety a lot. Or perhaps you are quick to anger lately and it's just not usually like you. If this is you or you know somebody who is in this spot, listen on my friends.

So I work with high achieving leaders, these are leaders, men and women who are running decent sized companies, by decent sized companies, multiple millions, tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars. They work in their family business so they work with family. And they have leadership teams and they have a lot going on. Yet inevitably in one of our first sessions my client will ask me something like confidence, "Is this an emotion? If so I want more of that." The models that I use are really to help my clients connect with themselves and their brains.

They are used to create some awareness in one's life. And when you have that awareness you can basically change if something's not working or strengthen something that is and do more of it. So one of the models is kind of based in cognitive behavior therapy, and there is a connection between your thoughts, and your feelings, and your actions, and the results that you're getting.

So if you're not getting the results that you're looking for then you can kind of work a bit upstream and figure out what's going on emotionally? What's

[The Family Business Leader Podcast](#) with Ellie Frey Zagel

## Ep #7: The Emotional Armoire

going on with your thoughts, your brain, your beliefs, what actions are you taking? And you can really scientifically look at what is happening in your life that is giving you the results that you do not want? You could also do this work on results that you do have, do like. And so you can replicate them.

It's incredibly, incredibly fun work and this is kind of the work that we do in The Family Business Leader Mastermind. So back to what my clients ask me, "Confidence, is that an emotion? If so I want more of that." A lot of my clients want more confidence especially if they're dealing with a lot of stuff or if they recently got promoted to President, CEO. So yes, confidence is an emotion. We are often very disconnected with our emotions especially if we're in our left logical brain a lot.

And I am one of those people; I thrive in my left analytical logical brain. And what I'm learning to how to do is get more into that right creative EQ type of brain during the day. And since my clients are so often in their, what I call their go, go, go, fight, fight, fight, win, win, win brain I give my clients an emotion wheel.

If you Google, emotion wheel and hopefully you'll have a link to one of my favorites, there'll be a whole slew of these emotion wheels that you can kind of start to identify emotions. I give an emotion wheel to each of my clients as they start off because one of the things I will ask them throughout our coaching is, "How are you feeling right now?" Sometimes they say to me, "Well, I feel like everything is really bad right now." Or, "I feel like they shouldn't do that." And so their thoughts are, like the feeling is actually a thought.

So my clients also confuse emotions or feelings with thoughts. Their thought is they shouldn't be doing that. Their emotion is frustration. You can see the difference. But so often I'm like, "Hey, so what are you feeling right now?" And, "Well, I feel like my brother really shouldn't be doing that. He should really be supporting me and acting in this way." I help my clients determine what is their thought about their brother and the emotion that's

## Ep #7: The Emotional Armoire

behind it, which is maybe anger or frustration, and then we can do something about it.

So personally I think identifying emotions, especially while at work is the secret source to great leadership. We have had those leaders who are compassionate, who are authentic, who expressed empathy. They had a high emotional intelligence. And honestly their employees would walk through walls for them. These are the leaders that you're like, "Oh my gosh, I am so glad that I got to work with that leader."

And conversely we've had those leaders in our lives, those bosses in our lives who are harsh, unmoving, seemingly no feelings, they were not compassionate, they were not understanding. They just wanted you to produce, that was it. It doesn't matter if you were having a bad day. They were very difficult to work with and for.

So as I mentioned before I am pretty left brain, that's why I love business. I love business plans. I love to figure out how things are made. I just love everything about business. And I'm very logical and process and it drives my husband crazy. So one time I got coached and my coach, Lindsay Dotzlaf said to me, "It's basically like you're holding your emotions in a cabinet of some sort." I'm like, "What?" She's so right.

And the term I kind of came up with, with her help was just this emotional armoire. And what this means metaphorically is that when we don't want to feel our emotions, and for me it looked like I don't have time to feel this emotion. And the emotion would be anger, or frustration or judgment, overwhelm, anxiety, all of those kind of negative emotions. I don't want to call them negative but they're a little bit painful even, maybe they cause your stomach to clench or your jaw to clench and they just don't feel very good.

And so whenever I was feeling those emotions I would just stuff them into this metaphorical emotional armoire. If you can picture an armoire in your mind, I was basically – I know some of you are like this, this is why I'm sharing. I was basically just whenever I didn't want to feel something I would just push it into the armoire, just push it away. I don't have time for

## Ep #7: The Emotional Armoire

this. Didn't ever come back to it, just kind of pushed it away, not wanting to deal with it whatsoever and so I didn't.

And so I was just filling, and filling, and filling this armoire, not processing any of my emotions, which honestly, the negative ones, and the really positive ones because I wasn't feeling all of my emotions, so even the negative judgment, or shame, or any of those emotions. I wasn't processing but I also wasn't processing my joy and feeling amazing. It's kind of interesting how that works out. I was just feeling this very thin band of acceptable emotions which was fine until it wasn't.

And for me I want to live the full human experience. I want to feel all of my emotions. That's some of the work that I'm doing as a person, as a human. And so for me what was happening is I was filling up this metaphorical emotional armoire with so many emotions that it was busting at the seams. So picture this, you have this huge armoire that's following you around behind you. I kind of think of it like beauty and the beast, the armoire and beauty and beast, kind of bopping along behind you with clothes falling out of it.

In this case emotions coming out of it in the seams, it's just bursting. And I'm holding it tight. I'm holding it closed with my arm. I'm just keeping it closed. My fist is tight around the handles of this armoire, this metaphorical armoire holding the emotions back, pushing them away. They want to come out, I'm like, "No way, I don't have time, not interested." That's just a mess in there. Moving on, I've got stuff to do. But what it's doing is it's depleting me. I'm exhausted from holding my emotions back.

I am exhausted from keeping my arm up, keeping this armoire, this emotional armoire closed. I'm exhausted and now I'm stuck because I'm not processing any of my emotions. I'm just stuck. So my master coach, Bev Aron says things like, I'm going to paraphrase her. But basically if you have stuck feelings, if your feelings are kind of stuck in that armoire, you're not processing them, you're not identifying them, you're not saying hello to them if you will, then you have a stuck life.

## Ep #7: The Emotional Armoire

So if you are not getting some of the results that you want or maybe you've set goals over and over again, or you just don't, you're kind of looking at your rocks and you're like I just don't know how I'm going to do that. Maybe you're exhausted. For me it would show up as quick anger, I would kind of snap at usually my husband; he's so amazing, my husband or my son. If that's where you are I just want you to know that you're not alone. But you might want to try to do something like pay attention to your emotions.

So in the mastermind I teach you how to fully process your emotions and kind of really empty the emotional armoire. But here I would just – I have two simple exercises that you can do pretty much at anytime anywhere. And these simple exercises should bring awareness where maybe you didn't have any awareness. And once you have that awareness you can do something about it. I really believe that awareness is the first step to growth and to get anything that you want. You have to know what you want.

You have to create awareness of why you're not getting it. And this is basically understanding your emotions. It's something that we don't talk about as leaders. You don't have emotions in the business. I've talked about this before. We know we're not robots. We know we're humans. And humans actually do have emotions. And we look around and we see examples of amazing leaders who also have emotions.

And so if you are not processing any emotions, if you are holding that metaphorical emotional armoire tightly closed behind you I want you to consider trying these exercises. So the first one and you can be in the elevator, you can be at your desk, you can be anywhere. It's just a quick body scan. So check your body, ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?" And if you're having a hard time identifying the emotion you can check out the emotions wheel. What am I feeling right now?

And then there's a next step too which I'll get to but ultimately you can track your emotions, what you're feeling the most and then you can also track when you're feeling them. So I know that when certain things happen in my life I'm going to feel anxiety. And it usually happens quarterly right before

## Ep #7: The Emotional Armoire

my Family Foundation meetings, I'm feeling some anxiety. My stomach gets tight and that is the next exercise.

If you can't get to identifying specifically the emotion, confidence, joy, anxiety, overwhelm, frustration, resentment, anger, if you can't get there I want you to get to what are you feeling in your body. So I tend to feel my emotions in my stomach and my jaw. And so what this means is my stomach will get tight, maybe I'll feel a little bit queasy, or my jaw will get tight and I'll just grind my teeth. And once I pay attention to that I can start intentionally relaxing my jaw. I know that's not good, breathing into my stomach and start relaxing those physical sensations.

I have been starting to track the physical sensations with my clients. And actually Maggie Rayas, I've had her on the podcast before, also does this work with her clients. And we just start tracking the physical sensations, like nausea, tightness in chest; your shoulders are rising to your ears. Maybe you have tears in your eyes. We're just tracking those.

We're going kind of backwards, okay, I see this, what's happening, why am I experiencing that? And instead of just brushing it off and pushing it away, and stuffing it in the emotional armoire I want you to create this awareness and basically say, "I see you. I see you, I see." Alright, this case it's me, I see me that I have a tight stomach, okay, let me breathe into it and see if I can relax it. I wonder why that is a tight stomach.

I've a board packet to read and I haven't scheduled it on my calendar. I don't know when I'm going to do it. Or I have a conversation with a new client and I haven't really prepared for it. Okay, well, if that's it I can just prepare, schedule it. So this sounds a little bit weird. It's because you haven't done it before. Nobody teaches, or very few people teach this in leadership. And in family business we're not just here for a quarter or two. We're here for a decade or two. So what works sometimes often isn't going to work all the time.

So one of the things I want, I just want you to try it. If you are feeling stuck, I want you to try something new. If you've been feeling, especially if you've been feeling stuck for a while, for me the simple awareness, just this

## Ep #7: The Emotional Armoire

awareness of identifying my emotions, identifying where they're showing up in my body helps me get unstuck and move forward. And it helps my clients do the same. They feel more in control of their life. And from that place of control they can move forward and to start to lead strong again.

Alright my friends, as always, if you have any questions, email me. In the meantime have an amazing week and I'll see you next week.

Well, there you have it. Thank you so much for listening to *The Family Business Leader Podcast*. If you've enjoyed today's episode, be sure to share it with someone who needs it. If you'd like more information about family business leadership development, please visit [successfulgenerations.com](http://successfulgenerations.com). I can't wait to connect with you again next week, until then.